AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #116

BOOK ONE: WATER
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: "The Deserter"

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ACT ONE

EXT. ROADSIDE KIOSK — DAY

Aang, Katara, and Sokka stand by a roadside kiosk festooned with notices, bulletins, and posters. Momo sits atop the kiosk while Appa waits nearby.

KATARA
This should give us a good idea what's around here.

SOKKA
See if you can find a menu. I'm starving.

Aang points excitedly to a multi-colored poster.

AANG
I bet we'll find something to eat here: The Fire Days Festival.

Sokka rolls his eyes. He walks around to the other side of the kiosk. Aang continues reading the festival poster.

AANG
Fire Nation cultural exhibits, jugglers, benders, magicians - this would be a great place for me to study some real Firebenders!

SOKKA
You might want to rethink that. Look at this.

Aang and Katara walk around to see what Sokka is looking at. On the other side of the kiosk are pinned a group of wanted posters, including one featuring the Blue Spirit -- right in the middle of the group is a poster of Aang.

AANG
Hey, a poster of me!

SOKKA
A <u>wanted</u> poster.
(shakes head)
This is bad.

KATARA
I think we better keep moving.

AANG
I have to learn Firebending at some point, and this could be my only chance to watch some masters up close.

Katara looks at Aang, skeptically. She thinks it over for a moment.

KATARA
I guess we could go check it out.

SOKKA
What? You want to walk into a Fire Nation town when they're all fired up with all their, you know, fire?

KATARA
We'll wear disguises, and if it looks like trouble, we'll leave.

Sokka nods, defeated.

SOKKA
Yeah. Because we always leave before we get into trouble.

The group heads off. As they go, we HOLD ON one of the wanted posters. It's a picture of JEONG JEONG, a clean-cut Fire Nation general with a tidy goatee and a sharp uniform, and a unique battle scar across his cheek.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING – DUSK

The kids stand on a hill overlooking the Fire Nation village where the festival is taking place. They're in a clearing next to a forest. Aang turns to Appa and Momo.

AANG
You guys stay out of sight here while we go to the festival.

Appa flops down in the grass to nap. Momo hops up and down on Appa's stomach.

MOMO
(CHITTERING)

AANG
Ready disguises!

Sokka and Katara pull on hooded cloaks. Aang lamely pulls his shirt up over his head. Sokka looks at him, exasperated.

SOKKA
It’s like you’re a whole different person.

AANG
Let’s go.

The kids head off. As they leave, we see a CLOAKED FIGURE watching them from the woods. The figure emerges slowly... then he follows the kids into town.

EXT. FIRE NATION TOWN — NIGHT

The town is packed with Fire Nation folks enjoying a festival that’s somewhere between Mardi Gras and Chinese New Year. The streets are decorated with lanterns and loud music plays.

As the kids cautiously enter the fray, a group of people in a long dragon costume with a giant, menacing head almost run them over. Katara looks around at the crowd.

KATARA
I think we need some new disguises.

Aang and Sokka glance around. All the Fire Nation people are wearing brightly colored masks.

SOKKA
Where are we going to get masks like that?

A MERCHANT stands a few feet behind Sokka yelling--

MERCHANT
Get your genuine Fire Festival masks here!

Sokka smiles, his question answered. Aang and Katara hustle over. Sokka follows.

SOKKA
That was surprisingly easy.

EXT. FIRE FESTIVAL - LATER

Now outfitted in proper Fire Nation masks, the kids move about the crowd undetected, taking in the scene. They walk over to a food stand where a VENDOR waits.

AANG
Hey, there’s some food.

SOKKA
Finally. What do you have?

FOOD VENDOR
Flaming fire flakes. Best in town.

The vendor hands him a bag and Sokka immediately pops a handful in his mouth. His eyes widen and he breathes out a puff of steam.

SOKKA
I'll take em. Ooh! Hot! Hot!

Katara shakes her head.

KATARA
("duh")
Flaming fire flakes. Hot. What do you know.

AANG
Hey, look at this!

He leads them over towards a makeshift puppet theater. A group of FIRE NATION KIDS sit in front, watching a Punch and Judy-style show. A FIRE LORD PUPPET with a fancy costume talks to the kids.

FIRE LORD PUPPET
Don't worry, loyal citizens, no one can surprise the Fire Lord.

As he talks, another PUPPET WITH A STICK sneaks up behind him. The kids shout a warning.

KIDS
Look out!

The other puppet whacks the Fire Lord in the head with the stick, knocking him across the stage. The Fire Lord gets up and blasts an actual fireball at the other puppet, setting him ablaze.

KIDS
Hooray!

As the kids clap and cheer, Aang shares a troubled look with Sokka and Katara. They slowly back away from the show.

EXT. FIRE FESTIVAL — LATER

Aang leads the kids through a tightly packed crowd toward a stage. Katara and Sokka struggle to keep up.

KATARA
Aang, hold on. Where are we going?

AANG
I don’t know, but there’s a big crowd, so it must be good.

SOKKA
Knowing the Fire Nation, it’s probably an execution.

They finally push their way to the front of a big stage where a FIREBENDING MAGICIAN is performing. He juggles some balls of fire that he turns into doves, which fly over the crowd, singing.

CROWD
Oooh! Aaah!

As they applaud, Aang turns to Katara.

AANG
I gotta learn that trick!

The magician bows, then steps to the front of the stage.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
Thank you! For my next trick, I need a volunteer from the audience.

Aang raises his hand to volunteer, but Sokka quickly yanks his hand down.

AANG
Ew ew, me, me!

SOKKA
What do you think you’re doing?

AANG
I want to get a closer look.

KATARA
It’s better that we don’t attract any attention to ourselves.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
(to Katara)
How about you, little lady?

Everyone looks at Katara.

KATARA
Uhh...

Katara shakes her head.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
Aww, she’s shy. Let’s give her some encouragement, folks.

The crowd applauds and starts pushing Katara forward. She can’t escape, and the magician pulls her up on the stage. She and Sokka share a worried look. Aang is disappointed.

AANG
Aw, that could’ve been me.

IN THE BACK OF THE CROWD-

-we see the cloaked figure that followed the kids from the woods. While the crowd around him applauds Katara on stage, he watches Aang intently. He starts making his way to the front of the crowd, toward Aang.

BACK ON STAGE

The magician pulls out a chair and sits Katara in it.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
This next trick is called “Taming the Dragon”.
(to Katara)
You will be my captured princess.

He pulls a long scarf out of his sleeve and wraps it around Katara, tying her in the chair. She looks at him nervously.

He smiles and winks at the crowd, who are clearly jacked up for this trick. He does an overly dramatic Firebending move, conjuring up a very realistic, large, flaming dragon.

Katara’s eyes widen with fear, and she looks down at Sokka and Aang. Sokka is visibly nervous, and even Aang seems to be doubting the wisdom of coming to the festival.

The dragon flies around over Katara’s head, belching out flames. Katara ducks down, trying to avoid it.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
Don’t worry, young maiden! I will tame this fiery beast!

He makes another ridiculously elaborate move and produces a flaming lasso, which he whirls over his head and throws around the dragon's neck. The dragon fights the rope, and the magician makes a big show of struggling with his creation.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
It's too strong! I can't hold it!

Katara closes her eyes in fear. Aang and Sokka watch, terrified, totally buying into the drama.

AANG
We've gotta help her!

SOKKA
(sotto)
No, we don't want to make a scene.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
The rope! It's breaking!

The fire lasso begins to dissolve, and finally breaks. The dragon, free from its bond, flies directly at Katara's head, preparing to blast a fireball right in her face.

ANGLE ON: The cloaked figure, just inches away from Aang, reaches out for him, but --

Aang, unable to control himself any longer, jumps on stage to defend Katara. He does a powerful Airbending move which immediately blows the dragon away into a colorful cloud of confetti. It also knocks the magician down and causes Aang's mask to come flying off.

The magician looks up from the ground, shaken.

FIREBENDING MAGICIAN
He, you trying to upstage me, kid?

The crowd turns angry at Aang for ruining the show.

CROWD
(BOOS AND JEERS)

Aang shrugs sheepishly, realizing he just made a big mistake.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
Hey! That kid's the Avatar!

Sokka climbs on stage and starts untying Katara.

SOKKA
I think it’s time to go.

The crowd starts to turn into an unruly mob. Fire Nation soldiers approach the stage. As they close in, the cloaked figure (CHEY) jumps on the stage with them.

CHEY
Follow me! I can get you out of here!

He sweeps up the kids and throws down a smoke bomb. The bomb goes off, covering their escape just as some FIRE NATION GUARDS jump onto the stage to give chase.

FIRE NATION GUARD
There they are!

EXT. FIRE FESTIVAL ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

The kids follow Chey, who seems to know where he’s going. As they duck between some vendors’ stalls, they hear behind them-

FIRE NATION GUARD
Over there!

The kids look back and see the guards giving chase.

AANG
I’m calling Appa.

While they continue running, Aang grabs his Appa whistle and blows. It doesn’t seem to make any sound.

SOKKA
I hope he can really hear that bison whistle.

CHEY
This way!

Chey starts to lead them down another alley, but a different group of guards appears at the end.

CHEY
Okay, not this way.

He tosses an explosive flare, momentarily distracting the guards, then he wheels the kids around and takes them down another alley. As they reach the end, they see that it’s blocked by a giant wagon of fireworks. They’re trapped.

The guards appear at the end of the alley and start coming for them. Chey pushes the kids behind him and pulls a short sword from under his cloak.

Chey charges the guards and tries to hold them off. He's an incredible swordsman, and thanks to the close quarters in the alley he manages to keep them away. The kids jump in with him, pushing the guards back further. As Chey fights, Appa circles overhead, bellowing.

AANG
Appa! Down here!

Appa lands.

Chey jumps on Appa's back as the Fire Nation Guards start to collect themselves for another attack. As Appa takes off, Chey drops another smoke bomb in the fireworks wagon.

Appa glides over the guards as the fireworks start to go off behind him. On his way up out of town, he gets a string of lanterns caught around his neck, and they dangle behind him like the tail of a kite.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The kids look down at the Fire Festival, then at Chey.

AANG
Nice touch setting off the fireworks.

SOKKA
You seem to really know your explosives.

CHEY
I'm familiar.

SOKKA
(accusing)
You're a Fire Nation soldier!

CHEY
<u>Was</u>.
(beat)
My name's Chey.

The kids exchange concerned looks as they zoom away.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The kids and Chey have made camp in the woods, and they sit around a little fire.

CHEY
I serve a man -- more than a man, really, he's a myth -- but he's real! A living legend, Jeong Jeong the Deserter. He was a Fire Nation general... or wait, was he an admiral?

Chey interrupts himself and scratches his head.

SOKKA
(impatient)
He was very highly ranked, we get it.

CHEY
Yeah, way up there! But he couldn't take the madness anymore. He's the first person ever to leave the army and live. I'm the second, but you don't get to be a legend for that. That's okay though. Jeong Jeong's a Firebending genius. Some say he's mad, but he's not. He's enlightened!

Aang hears the words "powerful Firebender" and perks up.

AANG
You mean there's a Firebender out here who's not with the Fire Lord? We've got to go see him! He can train me!

Sokka stands up.

SOKKA
We're not going to go find some crazy Firebender.

CHEY
He's not crazy! He's a genius!
(to Aang)
And he's the perfect person to train the Avatar. That's why I followed you into the festival.

SOKKA
Look, thanks for the help, but we're leaving for the North Pole in the morning.

AANG
Sokka, this could be my only chance to meet a Firebending master -- who would actually be willing to teach me.

KATARA
It can't hurt just to talk to him.

Sokka looks at them like they're crazy and starts shouting.

SOKKA
That's what you said about going to the festival! Why doesn't anyone ever listen to me?

He turns around angrily to storm off, only to find himself face to face with a spear tip. The camp is surrounded by ARMED PRIMITIVE TRIBESMEN, their leader is LIN YE.

LIN YE
Don't move.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The tribesmen lead the kids through the woods. Momo follows, flitting around in the trees. A few of the tribesmen walk with Appa, a little scared, but he lopes along peacefully. The leader of the tribesmen, Lin Ye, turns to Chey.

LIN YE
Jeong Jeong told you not to look for Avatar.

SOKKA
Hold on, you know these guys?

CHEY
Oh, yeah, Lin Ye's an old buddy. Right, Lin Ye?

Lin Ye pokes him with a spear.

LIN YE
Shut up, keep moving.

Chey nods and keeps quiet. The kids share a worried look.

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP – NIGHT

The group emerges from the forest into a clearing by a river. In the clearing sits a little camp of grass huts. Lin Ye pushes Chey toward a hut in the center.

LIN YE
Go on. He sees you only.

CHEY
(nervously)
Oh, that's okay. We can chat later.

AANG
Is that where Jeong Jeong is? I need to talk to him right away.

Aang starts for Jeong Jeong's hut, but the natives stop him.

LIN YE
No. You wait there.

He gestures to another hut, then prods Chey again.

LIN YE
Go. Now.

Chey, now visibly shaken, tries to pull himself together. He turns to the kids.

CHEY
Don’t worry. Everything will be fine. He’s a great man, great man.

Chey slowly makes his way toward Jeong Jeong’s hut as the kids are herded into their hut to wait.

EXT. FIRE FESTIVAL TOWN - NIGHT

Admiral Zhao and a few of his SOLDIERS stand in front of the Fire Nation guards who chased Chey and the kids.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
So the Avatar was here and you let him slip away.

The guards exchange scared looks. Their CAPTAIN speaks up.

GUARD CAPTAIN
Yes, sir, but other than that the festival went off without a hitch. No fights, theft was way down--

ADMIRAL ZHAO
I don’t care about your local crime rates! Which way did they go?

GUARD CAPTAIN
They headed into the forest. Up the river I suspect.

Zhao turns to his men.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Ready the river boats. We’re going after the Avatar.

His men run off to prepare.

EXT. JEONG JEONG’S CAMP – NIGHT

Chey emerges from Jeong Jeong’s hut, looking quite shaken.

INT. THE KIDS’ HUT - CONTINUOUS

The kids are all asleep. As Chey enters, Aang jerks awake.

AANG
What happened? Can I see Jeong Jeong now?

Chey collapses on the floor. The others wake up.

CHEY
He won't see you. He's very angry that I brought you here. He wants you to leave immediately.

SOKKA
Finally. Let's hit the road.

AANG
Why won't he see me?

CHEY
He says you're not ready -- says you haven't mastered Waterbending and Earthbending yet.

AANG
Wait, how does he know that?

Chey shrugs.

CHEY
He saw the way you walked into camp. He can tell!

Aang looks at him, puzzled.

AANG
I'm going in anyway.

He walks out of the hut.

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP – CONTINUOUS

Aang enters Jeong Jeong's hut.

INT. JEONG JEONG'S HUT – CONTINUOUS

As Aang enters the hut all his confidence leaves him. JEONG JEONG, a ragged old man with long hair and a messy beard, sits on the ground in the corner, surrounded by candles. He looks nothing like the trim, clean-cut Fire Nation officer we saw earlier on the wanted poster, except for the scar on his cheek. He doesn't look up.

JEONG JEONG
Get out.

Aang slowly walks up to him and sits cross-legged on the floor. He bows his head.

AANG
Master, I need to learn Firebending.

Jeong Jeong looks up at him menacingly.

JEONG JEONG
Only a fool seeks his own destruction.

AANG
I'm the Avatar. It's my destiny to-

JEONG JEONG
(cutting him off angrily)
Destiny? What would a boy know of destiny? If a fish lives its whole life in this river, does he know the river's destiny? No. Only that it runs on and on, out of his control. He may follow where it flows, but he cannot see the end. He cannot not imagine the ocean.

Aang waits for more. Jeong Jeong sits in silence.

AANG
Okay...
(getting back on track)
But it's the Avatar's duty to master all of the bending disciplines.

JEONG JEONG
To master the bending disciplines, you must first master discipline itself. But you have no interest in this. So I have no interest in you. Now get out.

Aang starts to get angry, but he checks himself.

AANG
Please. I have to learn. This could be my only chance.

Jeong Jeong looks at him, enraged.

JEONG JEONG
Are you deaf? How can I teach you if you refuse to listen? Before learning Firebending you must learn water and earth. Water is cool and soothing, earth is steady and stable. But fire...

He looks at the candles all around him. The candles rise and burn brighter as the intensity of Jeong Jeong's emotions increases.

JEONG JEONG (CONT'D)
Fire is alive. It breathes, it grows. Without the bender, a rock will not throw itself. But fire will spread and destroy everything in its path if one does not have the will to control it. That --
(he looks at Aang)
-- is its destiny! You are not ready. You are too weak!!

As Jeong Jeong's speech crescendoes, the flames rise dramatically, startling Aang. As we see a glimmer of fear in Aang's eyes, suddenly all the candles are extinguished and the room goes completely dark. One candle relights itself, and the dim light reveals the figure of ROKU standing where Aang was.

AVATAR ROKU
You think I am weak?

JEONG JEONG
(shaken and afraid)
Avatar Roku. No, no. I -- I didn't mean that.

AVATAR ROKU
I have mastered the elements a thousand times in a thousand lifetimes. Now I must do it once again. You will teach the Avatar Firebending.

Jeong Jeong bows and averts his eyes deferentially.

JEONG JEONG
Yes, yes... I will teach you.

At that instant, all the candles come back on revealing Aang is back.

AANG
(huge grin)
Really? That's great!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP — THE NEXT MORNING

Aang stands by the river with Jeong Jeong. Katara practices her Waterbending nearby while Sokka fishes.

JEONG JEONG
Widen your stance.

Aang adjusts his feet to about shoulder width.

JEONG JEONG
Wider.

Aang moves his feet a little further out.

JEONG JEONG
Bend your knees.

Aang squats down a little.

JEONG JEONG
Now concentrate.

Aang puts on his "concentrating" face.

JEONG JEONG
Good, good!

Jeong Jeong starts to walk away.

AANG
Wait! What do I do now?

Jeong Jeong whirls around angrily.

JEONG JEONG
Silence! Talking is not concentrating!
(re: Katara)
Look at your friend. Is she talking?
(re: Sokka)
Even that oaf knows to concentrate on what he's doing.

Sokka looks over at him.

SOKKA
Hey!

AANG
But what am I concentrating on?

JEONG JEONG
Feel the heat of the Sun. It is the greatest source of fire -- yet it is in complete balance with nature.

AANG
So when do I get to make some fire?

JEONG JEONG
Concentrate!

Jeong Jeong walks away, leaving Aang in his stance. Aang sighs and tries to concentrate. He looks over at Sokka and Katara, who giggle at him. Aang looks away and tries to concentrate again.

EXT. ROCKY HILLSIDE - DAY

Aang follows Jeong Jeong to the top of a rocky hill overlooking the forest.

AANG
Are we coming up here so I don’t burn anything with my fire blasts?

JEONG JEONG
No fire yet.

AANG
(disappointed)
What?

Jeong Jeong keeps hiking. He stops on a giant boulder hanging over the edge of a valley. Aang stands beside him.

JEONG JEONG
Power in Firebending comes from the breath. That is why you must master proper breath control.

Aang looks at him incredulously.

AANG
You brought me up here to breathe?

JEONG JEONG
(firm)
Assume your stance.

Aang does.

JEONG JEONG
Wider.

AANG
You’re not even look--

JEONG JEONG
Wider!

Aang repositions his feet. Jeong Jeong still doesn’t look.

JEONG JEONG
Now inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Without talking.

Aang does.

JEONG JEONG
Good. Keep going.

He walks down the hill, leaving Aang to his breathing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEONG JEONG’S HUT — LATER

Jeong Jeong sits in his hut, making tea. Aang comes in.

JEONG JEONG
What are you doing here? I did not tell you to stop.

AANG
I’ve been breathing for hours.

JEONG JEONG
You want to stop breathing?

AANG
I want you to stop wasting my time! I already know how to squat and breathe and feel the sun. I want to know how to shoot fire out of my fingertips!

There is a long beat as Jeong Jeong absorbs Aang’s outburst.

JEONG JEONG
(SIGHS) I had a pupil once who had no interest in learning discipline. He was only concerned with the power of fire, how he could use it to destroy his opponents and wipe out the obstacles in his path.

As he tells the story we--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIVER – DAY

Admiral Zhao's boats push upriver through the forest toward Jeong Jeong's camp.

JEONG JEONG (V.O.)
But fire is a horrible burden to bear. Its nature is to consume, and without control it destroys everything around it.

Zhao's boats are suddenly hit with a barrage of wooden spears and arrows as Jeong Jeong's native warriors attack from the cover of the forest alongside the river.

The boat crews are caught by surprise, and they duck for cover. But Admiral Zhao and his Firebenders appear on the deck and begin blasting fireballs into the brush.

Soon all the foliage along the river is in flames, and the natives have to scramble away to avoid being burned alive.

The native warriors are totally routed, and Admiral Zhao smiles as his boats continue up the river.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEONG JEONG'S HUT – CONTINUOUS

Jeong Jeong pours himself a cup of tea.

JEONG JEONG
Learn restraint or risk destroying yourself and everything you love.

Aang hangs his head and walks out, dejected and angry.

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP – LATER

Jeong Jeong exits his hut to find Aang waiting for him. Katara works on her Waterbending from a nearby rain barrel.

AANG
I thought about what you said. I promise I'll be more patient.

Aang bows respectfully. A beat.

JEONG JEONG
We're going to work with fire now.

Aang leaps up excitedly.

AANG
Oh yeah!

Jeong Jeong gives him a stern look and Aang settles down.

AANG
I mean... let us begin.

Jeong Jeong picks up a tiny dead brown leaf off the ground. He makes a reverent gesture, and the leaf catches fire in the middle. (Picture a dry leaf which has been ignited in the center with a magnifying glass -- a tiny hole appears, with red hot smoldering edges.) He hands the burning leaf to Aang.

JEONG JEONG
Concentrate on the fire. I want you to keep this flame from reaching the edges of the leaf for as long as you can.

Aang sighs sadly. As he looks at the leaf, Lin Ye comes running up, his clothes torn and singed.

LIN YE
Master! There is trouble.

Jeong Jeong starts away with Lin Ye.

AANG
What's going on?

JEONG JEONG
Concentrate on your leaf!

He storms off and Aang looks over at Katara.

AANG
This is the worst Firebending instruction ever. All he does is leave me alone for hours to concentrate or breathe.

KATARA
I’m sure there’s a good reason.

AANG
But I’m ready to do so much more...

Aang concentrates hard on the leaf -- nothing happens. He focuses harder... and causes a flame to appear on the leaf.

AANG
(elated)
I did it... I made fire!

KATARA
Aang, that’s great. But you should take it slow--

Aang does a Firebending move on the flaming leaf, making the fire leap up dramatically!

KATARA
Careful!

AANG
Now that’s Firebending!

Aang does another move, making the fire shoot out of the end of the leaf like a fiery sword. Katara cringes.

KATARA
Aang, you’ll hurt yourself.

Aang ignores her and starts bouncing the flame around.

AANG
I wonder how that juggler did it.

He bounces the flame from hand to hand, but his moves get too wild, and he sends a fireball toward Katara.

Katara puts up her hands to fend off the flame. The fireball explodes in her hands, burning her. [To be artfully implied, not violently depicted.]

KATARA
Aaaaahhhhhh!

Aang rushes over to her, panicked.

AANG
Katara! Oh, no! I’m so sorry!

Sokka comes running up.

SOKKA
Katara, what’s wrong?

He sees her burned hands, then looks over at Aang accusingly.

SOKKA
What did you do?

AANG
It was an accident. I was...
Katara, I’m so--

Aang moves toward Katara, but Sokka is over-protective and tackles Aang before he reaches her.

SOKKA
I told you we shouldn’t mess around with this! Look what you did! You burned my sister!

Aang watches in horror as Katara runs off toward the river. Off Aang’s reaction...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP — DAY

Sokka stands up and dusts himself off, while Aang stays on the ground.

SOKKA
You burned my sister!

Jeong Jeong comes running up.

SOKKA
(to Jeong Jeong)
This is all your fault!

JEONG JEONG
(nodding)
I know. Now pack your things. You must leave immediately.

Sokka gives Aang a final angry look and storms off. Jeong Jeong looks down at Aang, who looks like he might cry.

AANG
I'm sorry. I didn't... I'm sorry.

Jeong Jeong sighs disappointedly and walks off toward the river.

EXT. RIVER — DAY

Katara kneels by the edge of the river, soaking her hands in the water. She pulls them out and looks at them. They're red and blistered.

She puts her hands back in the water, then notices something. We can see it in her face: a cessation of pain.

She pulls her hands out again, and the water encases them like a pair of silvery gloves. She studies them, amazed.

JEONG JEONG (O.S.)
You have healing abilities.

She turns around to see Jeong Jeong standing behind her. The watery gloves dissolve back into liquid and drip away. Katara's hands are healed! Jeong Jeong smiles -- the first time we've seen that. Katara smiles back. He sits next to her.

JEONG JEONG
The great benders of the Water Tribe sometimes have this ability. I've always wished I were blessed like you, free from this burning curse.

KATARA
But you're a great master. You have powers I'll never know.

JEONG JEONG
Water brings healing and life. But fire brings only destruction and pain. It forces those of us burdened with its care to walk a razor's edge between humanity and savagery. Eventually, we're torn apart.

He hangs his head with the weight of his curse. As he speaks, Admiral Zhao's boats come into view, cruising toward them at full speed. Jeong Jeong jumps up and grabs Katara.

JEONG JEONG
Go get your friends and flee. Do not come back here or you'll all be destroyed. Hurry!

Katara runs off as the boats run up on the shore and Admiral Zhao's men start jumping off.

Jeong Jeong sets his feet, breathes deep, and erupts into a spectacular display of Firebending power. The soldiers are held at bay by a firestorm that engulfs the entire riverbank.

Jeong Jeong looks back to see that Katara is safely away, then suddenly stops his bending. The soldiers stand back, still frightened, but Admiral Zhao steps off his boat and strides confidently toward Jeong Jeong.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Don't worry, men. My old teacher gave up fighting a long time ago. Haven't you, Master Jeong Jeong?

He gives Jeong Jeong an icy smile. Jeong Jeong merely returns his gaze, totally serene.

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP — DAY

Katara comes running up and finds Sokka with all their things together and packed up on Appa.

SOKKA
Katara, are you all right?

KATARA
I’m fine. We’ve got to get out of here. Where’s Aang?

Sokka angrily gestures at Jeong Jeong’s hut.

INT. JEONG JEONG’S HUT — SAME

Katara enters and finds Aang looking much like Jeong Jeong did when we first saw him: haggard and tormented. He looks up at her sadly.

AANG
Jeong Jeong tried to tell me that I wasn’t ready. I wouldn’t listen.

She goes over to him and puts her hand on his shoulder.

AANG
I’m never going to Firebend again.

KATARA
You’ll have to, eventually.

AANG
No. Never again.

He looks at his hands, lost in his thoughts. Katara gently shakes him.

KATARA
It’s okay, Aang. I’m healed.

AANG
What? How?

KATARA
I’ll explain later but right now we have to get out of here. Zhao and his soldiers are attacking.

Aang snaps out of his reverie.

AANG
Where?

KATARA
By the river. They captured Jeong Jeong.

Aang jumps up and runs out.

AANG
I have to help him!

She runs after him.

EXT. RIVER — DAY

Jeong Jeong stands face to face with Admiral Zhao, who shakes his head with disgust. Zhao's men stand in formation on the shore.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Look at you. You were once so great. I can't believe my former master has become nothing more than a simple savage.

JEONG JEONG
It is you who has embraced savagery, Zhao.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
It's Admiral Zhao now.

JEONG JEONG
That title will not help you against the Avatar. Do not try to fight him. You are no match.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
I think I can handle a child.

Jeong Jeong shakes his head.

JEONG JEONG
I have never seen such raw power.

Admiral Zhao scowls. The comment clearly bothers his ego.

AANG (O.S.)
Jeong Jeong!

Zhao sees Aang running down toward them.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
We'll see.
(to his men)
Men, take the deserter.

As Zhao’s men surround Jeong Jeong, he and Aang share a farewell look. Then, Jeong Jeong does a does a huge Firebending move. When the smoke clears, he’s gone.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
It’s a trick! He’s run off into the woods, find him!

Zhao’s men head off into the woods. Zhao steps toward Aang.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Let’s find out what my old master has taught you.

Aang looks at Zhao, realizing-

AANG
You were Jeong Jeong’s student?

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Until I got bored.

Admiral Zhao launches a fireball attack. Aang manages to dive out of the way just in time.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
I see he taught you how to duck and run like a coward. But I doubt he showed you what a Firebender is truly capable of...

He launches a huge and impressive fire blast at Aang. Aang dives to the ground as the flames pass overhead.

AANG
Whoa! Wild shot.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
I’ll show you wild!

Zhao unleashes a barrage of multiple fire blasts. Aang deflects some and dodges others, rolling out of the way. He turns to see that Zhao’s blasts have ignited the forest behind Aang.

Aang sees Admiral Zhao’s boats on the water -- he gets an idea.

AANG
(sotto, to himself)
No self control.

Aang smiles.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Stand and fight, Avatar.

AANG
(taunting)
Oh, were we fighting? I thought you were just getting warmed up.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
I was.

He blasts at Aang again with even more ferocity. Aang zips out of the path of the fire and runs toward the river.

AANG
Is that all you got? Man, they'll make anyone an admiral these days.

Admiral Zhao, enraged, starts blasting at Aang in a rapid fire motion. Aang dodges and dives, jumping up on the deck of one of Admiral Zhao's boats.

AANG
Ahoy! I'm Admiral Zhao!

Admiral Zhao jumps up after him, continuing to blast away. Aang ducks behind the pilot house, which takes the brunt of several shots from Admiral Zhao.

Aang leaps from the deck of one boat to the one next to it.

AANG
I don't know why, but I thought you'd be <u>better</u> than Zuko.

He makes a goofy face then dives out of the way as Admiral Zhao fires at him again. The fireball hits the deck, sending crew members diving overboard.

Aang leaps onto the next boat and Admiral Zhao gives chase, firing as fast as he can.

AANG
Sloppy. Very sloppy.

Admiral Zhao continues to chase Aang from deck to deck, mustering all of his Firebending power trying to hit the Avatar.

Finally Admiral Zhao seems to have Aang cornered at the bow of one of the boats.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Nowhere to run now, you little smart-mouth.

Aang calmly gestures “bring it on”. Zhao winds up and delivers a terrifying blast at Aang. Aang leaps up out of the path of the blast, and does a flip, landing directly behind Zhao.

AANG
You’ve lost this battle.

Zhao whirls around to kick Aang, but Aang easily dodges.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
Are you crazy? You haven’t thrown a single blow.

AANG
No... but you have.

Aang motions to the destruction around him, and Zhao sees for the first time what he has done. All his ships are blazing infernos. His eyes widen in horror.

AANG
Jeong Jeong said you had no restraint.

Zhao looks down and is completely mortified by what he has done -- but the fury wells up in him, and again he cannot control himself: he unleashes a huge, angry blast.

ADMIRAL ZHAO
(SCREAM OF RAGE)

The resulting explosion sends Aang flipping backward. He manages to right himself mid-air and lands in some shallow muddy water by the bank. Aang looks back to see Zhao’s boats burning and sinking.

AANG
Have a nice walk home!

SOKKA (O.S.)
Aang, come on. Let’s go!

Aang looks behind him and sees Sokka, Katara, and Momo sitting on Appa. Aang hops on and they take off.

AANG
Wait, where’s Jeong Jeong?

SOKKA
(shaking his head)
He disappeared. They all did.

EXT. JEONG JEONG'S CAMP - THAT MOMENT

Chey walks into the empty camp and looks around.

CHEY
Hey, where'd everybody go? Very funny, guys.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Appa sails into the sky, and Sokka looks down at the smoking wreckage of Admiral Zhao's fleet, surrounded by a patch of smoldering forest.

KATARA
Aang, you're burned, let me help you.

Aang looks down and notices that Admiral Zhao's attacks did leave him a bit scraped and burned. Katara pours some water from a skin into her hand, then bends it onto Aang's wounds.

The water takes on a silvery glow, and the burns start to disappear.

AANG
Wow. That's good water.

Sokka looks at Katara, amazed.

SOKKA
When did you learn how to do that?

Katara shrugs.

KATARA
I guess I always knew.

SOKKA
Oh, well then, thanks for all the first aid over the years. Like when I fell in the Greaseberry bramble, and that time I had two fishhooks in my thumb-

AANG
Two?

KATARA
(to Aang)
He tried to get the first fishhook out with another fishhook.

SOKKA
Oh, and the time that Minksnake bit me, thanks for healing that up. That was great. Really helpful.

END OF SHOW